

Policing the industrial north of England, 1777-1877: the control of labour at work, and in the streets

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Introduction

Amongst the considerable and valuable canon of work on the introduction of public uniformed police services in the nineteenth-century, there has been a robust strand of research on privately-funded agencies of control.¹ Whilst research on publicly-funded bodies has largely focused on order-maintenance and preventative crime-control; others have studied the protection that private policing agencies offered to sectional interests. This article seeks to make some connections between the activities of one particular private agency – the Worsteds Committee and their Inspectorate – and the development of public policing in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the industrial north of England. In particular the article questions: how did a private agency designed to regulate private space and a public body (Bradford Borough Police) that was supposed to protect public order in public spaces find a working partnership in the mid- to late-nineteenth century; how successful was this unofficial arrangement; and what were the consequences that flowed from this notional partnership for the development of policing in the West Riding, and the control of labour in the workplace and in the streets?

Background

In the early years of the Industrial Revolution, the advantages of providing a privately financed form of policing in order to control both one's employees were often seen as outweighing the considerable effort and costs involved in maintaining an effectively operative force. For example, Freshfields, solicitors for the Bank of England, had employed their own team of men on a semi-permanent basis to investigate cases of forgery from at least the latter decades of the eighteenth century. Insurance companies have a similarly long history dating back to the eighteenth century of employing 'in-house' surveyors, investigators

¹ See for example, Godfrey and Cox (2013); King (2000); Reiner (2000); Johnston (1992); South (1987); Munsche (1981).

and assessors.² Other institutions also saw advantages in not having to rely on a parish constabulary system that was being viewed as increasingly outmoded and unfit for the purpose in an increasingly urbanizing and industrializing England. Most prominent among these were several of the various companies that sprung up in the heady years of canal and railway development in the late-Georgian and early-Victorian period, which by the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837 employed their own private police forces. The first half of the nineteenth century saw a blossoming of private police forces in the rapidly growing urban areas and the concomitant boom in trade: Grand Surrey Canal Police (founded 1809), Commercial Docks Police (1810), Admiralty Constabulary (1834), Gloucester Docks Police (1836), Liverpool Markets Police (1837), Hull Docks Police (1840), Regents Canal & Docks Police (1840) and the River Tyne Police (1845).

All of the private police forces shared one thing in common; they were only responsible to either essentially private committees or organizations – they usually had neither jurisdiction nor interest outside their own spheres of influence, nor were they subject to much external control.³ They were overwhelmingly concerned with internalized offending such as breaches of trust or internal larceny; they were never created for the good or benefit of the general public, and remained largely unconcerned with external offences or influences. The other common factor was that the newer agencies of the early nineteenth-century tended to be sponsored or funded by mercantile or manufacturing interests. For example, with regard to the West Riding of Yorkshire, the Halifax woollen manufacturers sponsored a Woollen Inspector between 1802 and 1807; a Linen Inspector briefly patrolled Barnsley; and there was a Woollen Inspector in Pudsey in the 1830s and also in Huddersfield between 1844 and 1851. Unfortunately, no records of these private prosecution agencies survive in the West Riding archives.⁴ However, the most utilized prosecution association in the region dominated by

² See Cox, (2012, pp. 86-7) for details of a Lloyds of London investigation.

³ For example, the status of the various docks police forces (with the exception of the Admiralty Constabulary) was consolidated under the Harbour, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847, which enabled two JPs to ‘appoint such Persons as shall be nominated for that Purpose by the Undertakers to be special Constables within the Limits of the Harbour, Dock, Pier, and Premises of the Undertakers, and within One Mile of the same; and every Person so appointed shall be sworn in by any such Justices duly to execute the Office of a Constable within the Limits aforesaid, and when so sworn in shall have the same Powers, Protections, and Privileges within the Limits aforesaid, and shall be subject to the same Liabilities, as Constables have or are subject to by the Laws of the Realm’.

⁴ See Soderlund (1992, p. 631). The West Riding was not unique in such development – see for example references to the activities of the Silk Inspectors who operated in Macclesfield, Cheshire, between 1819 and the

factory production – the Worsted Committee – *has* left extensive records and can therefore be used to study the impact of private policing in this context.

The Worsted Committee⁵

The Worsted Committee was established by 17 Geo. III, c.11 (1777) to enforce the clauses of 22 Geo. II, c.27 (1749), and thereby to retain, intensify and strengthen the employers' supremacy over the production process by facilitating increased recourse to the criminal code. A further act 17 Geo. III c.56 (1777) allowed the creation of a Worsted Inspectorate which was appointed and controlled by the Worsted Committee. A committee such as this obviously needed to maximise its access to people with some expertise and knowledge of manufacturing – if not the workings of the legal system (although such practical knowledge increased over time). Additionally, they needed to construct and maintain a legitimacy to 'police' the industry, and to occasionally discipline wealthy and powerful manufactures and merchants. Accordingly, the Committee was composed of twenty-seven members – eighteen from Yorkshire and nine from Cheshire and Lancashire respectively – who jointly represented the worsted industry in the North. Although all of the worsted producing regions and towns sent delegates to the Committee, in practice, from its inception till its demise, the Committee was dominated by, and largely run for the benefit of, the Bradford and Halifax manufacturers in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

In the eighteenth century the Committee had been composed of what one could term 'gentlemen-manufacturers' who were not only wealthy, but politically astute individuals wielding a good deal of local power. By the time that the introduction of public policing was being discussed in the region the composition had altered in character, with large scale 'professional' manufacturers now running the show. One aspect remained unchanged however. The nineteenth-century members were still enveloped in a mass of overlapping matrices of élite connections: political, matrimonial, familial, and social. Two-thirds of Bradford's Watch Committee (which was responsible for maintaining public order in the borough) were Worsted Committee members. Moreover, three members: Samuel Smith, John Hill and William Rand all attained the office of Mayor of Bradford. No one political party

1860s in Barrett (1995).

⁵ Worsted is a particular type of high quality long staple wool, used in the manufacture of tailored goods.

seems to have colonized the Committee, however; rather the Committee boasted the leading members of both parties who supported manufacturing interests – some ‘Free Trade’ Tories were members – whilst other Committee members were prominent Liberals.⁶ The political and social élite that sat round a table once a quarter to discuss trade, the detection and prosecution of appropriators, and presumably a host of other subjects, presided over the organization most determined to strike out appropriation and work-indiscipline from the worsted industry. The scale of losses through deliberate appropriation and the ‘wasting of time’ by employees were considerable and the factory system, which was partly introduced to try and control this loss, was only partially successful in eradicating workplace theft.⁷ The Committee were the men who were heavily involved in the transition from cottage industry to the factory age, and they were the men who controlled the prosecution society which would use the criminal law to bolster their authority.⁸

The Worsted Inspectorate

The primary objectives of the Inspectorate were to stop the simple theft of workplace materials, whether that took place in the out-worker’s cottage, the small manufactory, or the large factory, and also to stop the customary practices that had established themselves over time in the textile trade: in particular the practice of workers converting waste material for their own use. The Worsted Acts also empowered them to prosecute the ‘neglect of work’ (workers’ not completing contracts) and other infractions and breaches of contract. If conviction was secured, the offender was fined £20 in most cases, or in default (and most did default because this was an enormous sum to find for most workers – far in excess of their annual wage), they were imprisoned for a period of up to one month.

The history of the Worsted Committee and their Inspectors in the mid- to late-nineteenth century falls into four distinct phases. Initially, the Committee and their Inspectors were brought into life by the 1777 Worsted Acts, and they were charged with suppressing fraud in the domestic cottage textile industry.⁹ The second period was a short one, when the Committee really achieved its zenith after a large-scale centralised textile production system

⁶ *Bradford Observer*, 29 April 1852.

⁷ Godfrey and Cox (2013, p 13); Godfrey (1999).

⁸ Soderlund (1992, p. 335).

⁹ See Soderlund (1992).

arose in the 1830s, which came to be the dominant mode of production by the 1840s. The Committee and its Inspectors were able to wage war against appropriation because it could call not just on political and social capital, including a large tax remittance on the soap duty paid by manufacturers.¹⁰ A considerable amount of soap was used in the preparatory processes of cloth production, and as a concession to manufacturers the government allowed them to drawback a third of all duty paid on the ingredient. The Worsted Committee was entitled to a proportion of this drawback. This percentage was changed periodically by petition to the Leeds quarter sessions, either in favour of the Committee or the manufacturers, but remained the financial mainstay of the Committee's finances until 1853.¹¹ William Gladstone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, then drained the financial life-blood away. After this date, the Worsted Committee underwent substantial organizational changes in response to the financial crisis which ushered in a period when they operated at a reduced level. This third phase ended in 1870 when the Inspectorate were re-animated by the employers' response to their self-perceived needs and fears; and this last phase stretched to the Committee's final denouement in 1968.¹²

The Worsted Committee and their Inspectorate spanned a considerable length of time, and operated throughout the shift from domestic modes of production to industrial capitalism at its height. The ways the Inspectors operated 'in the field' in the early to mid nineteenth century, however, remained unchanged in many respects from that of the late-eighteenth century. Since material was often temporarily stored in a worker's house or shed, before being sold, or used by the worker to decorate or repair his household furnishings, the homes

¹⁰ The percentage claimed from drawback was applicable to all manufacturers in the counties covered by the Worsted Acts. For example, the Manchester Excise Office sent a cheque for £67-0-8 in 1847 which represented the payments of the few worsted establishments in Lancashire, thereafter there are entries for cheques from unnamed excise offices outside of Yorkshire ranging from £26 to £103 for the period 1849-53. See the relevant entries in the *Worsted Committee Account Books 1835-85*, West Yorkshire Archives: Bradford 56D88/1.

¹¹ Three other sources of revenue existed: the share dividends from the Committee's investments in the Leeds to Liverpool Canal Company; money raised from the sale of seized goods which were believed to have been appropriated, but were unclaimed by the owner (although this never amounted to a significant sum); and the proportion of any fine imposed by the courts on convicted appropriators (up to £10 per conviction) which was given over to the Committee by the guilty. See Heaton (1965, p. 437) for a discussion of the investments in the canal company. He suggests that these investments were ill-advised. They did, however, provide an income of £70 p.a. between 1840 and 1856, and £134 p.a. between 1857 and 1862, before falling back to £48 p.a. after that date, and this money tided the Committee over some very straitened times. With regard to unclaimed material, the 1777 Worsted Acts stated that any material found by the court to be embezzled must be returned to its rightful owners. If, however, the material remained unclaimed, or if the cloth had no identifiable markings, the material could subsequently be sold publicly for the benefit of the Committee.

¹² For a full account of the history of the Worsted Committee and its Inspectorate, see Godfrey and Cox (2013).

of factory workers were searched as assiduously as the houses and workshops of domestic out-workers had been previously. Inspectors merely had to obtain a warrant signed by two magistrates before searching the house of a suspect, often accompanied by parish constables (later police officers) and/or the suspect's employer (made permissible by 17 Geo III c.56 1777). The Inspectors continued to have little involvement with the direct supervision of the production process once factories had replaced domestic forms of production, although they occasionally placed agents inside the works in order to gain information.¹³ Rag and waste dealers too, as obvious receivers of appropriated goods, also continued to receive close attention from the Inspectorate, as they had done since the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The wide reporting of successful prosecutions also helped to maintain a consensus that manufacturers should continue to fund the Committee's activities; much of the Inspectorate's work was reported upon by local newspapers such as the *Bradford Advertiser*.¹⁴ These advertisements served to make the Inspectorate well-known to workers and employers alike, and the range and extent of their activities made them an obvious choice for those who wished to control appropriation.

The Committee encouraged this view by delineating clearly their area of jurisdiction and expertise. By concentrating their operations within well-defined geographical and legal areas they established a moral authority in pressing their right to police the industry. Although the Worsted Acts covered Lancashire and Cheshire as well as Yorkshire, the Inspectorate were mainly active in Keighley, Leeds, Bradford, and Halifax, the worsted producing regions of the Pennines, such as Newchurch, Colne and Blackburn (as well as Morley and Chorley for a brief period).¹⁵ Each of these districts was patrolled by an Inspector who reported his actions at every quarterly meeting of the Committee, which also checked the accuracy of the Inspector's recording of prosecutions and convictions.

If much of the Inspectors' operational methods remained largely unchanged across the

¹³ In January 1888, an Inspector placed a (plain-clothes) agent inside the works in order to find the man who had been stealing patterns from the mill. After identifying the man, the Inspector placed an advert in the *Bradford Observer* stating that he was a new manufacturer looking for patterns. The unsuspecting suspect sent the patterns along with a request for a job, and was convicted.

¹⁴ This was vital since the Committee had difficulty in persuading manufacturers to pay over their drawback remission when profits were falling.

¹⁵ These districts covered both the main areas of production, and the main living areas of industrial workers, often in outlying parishes. As the century progressed, the district shrank to only include the factory districts.

nineteenth century, the rise of the factory system did engender one major change in their *modus operandi*. The organization of the factory introduced a physical point at which searches could be conducted, and offenders apprehended – the factory gate. Surprisingly perhaps, only a seventh of the searches conducted by the Worsted Inspector and/or a Constable which led to prosecution took place at the factory gate (although this would seem to be the most beneficial place in terms of the prosecution proving an intent to steal in any subsequent court case).¹⁶ Nevertheless, the proportion of people apprehended at the gate together with those apprehended inside the premises (49.8%), makes it clear that the factory authority structure and physical organization contributed to the successful apprehension of many appropriators.¹⁷ The factory gate, in addition, should also have delineated very clearly where the private sphere controlled by the Worsted Inspectors, and the public sphere policed by uniformed public officers, started and ended. This was only partly the case.

The General Inspector of each region in which the Worsted Committee operated were salaried at a £130 per annum in 1852, and they also received £1 for every conviction.¹⁸ The original wage of the General Inspectors had been set at £50 per annum in 1777 but some were earning a yearly salary of over two hundred pounds by the mid-nineteenth century. Between 1847 and 1867, the General Inspectors' salaries therefore approached that of Bradford's Chief Constable (£235), and left Bradford's detectives far behind on £65 a year.¹⁹ This level of remuneration left only senior police officers earning more than the 'Assistant Inspectors' who were hired on an *ad-hoc* basis to assist with the searching of houses and arrest of suspects, but who were not given an annual salary.

It is clear that throughout the period the Worsted Committee attracted men who were able to perform detective duties in the field, as well as being able to act as prosecutors on behalf of victims in court. Until 1853 the Worsted Inspectorate was indisputably the main force for combating illegal appropriation within the worsted industry; they achieved hundreds of

¹⁶ *West Riding QS 1840-80*, West Yorkshire Archives Service: Wakefield WYP1

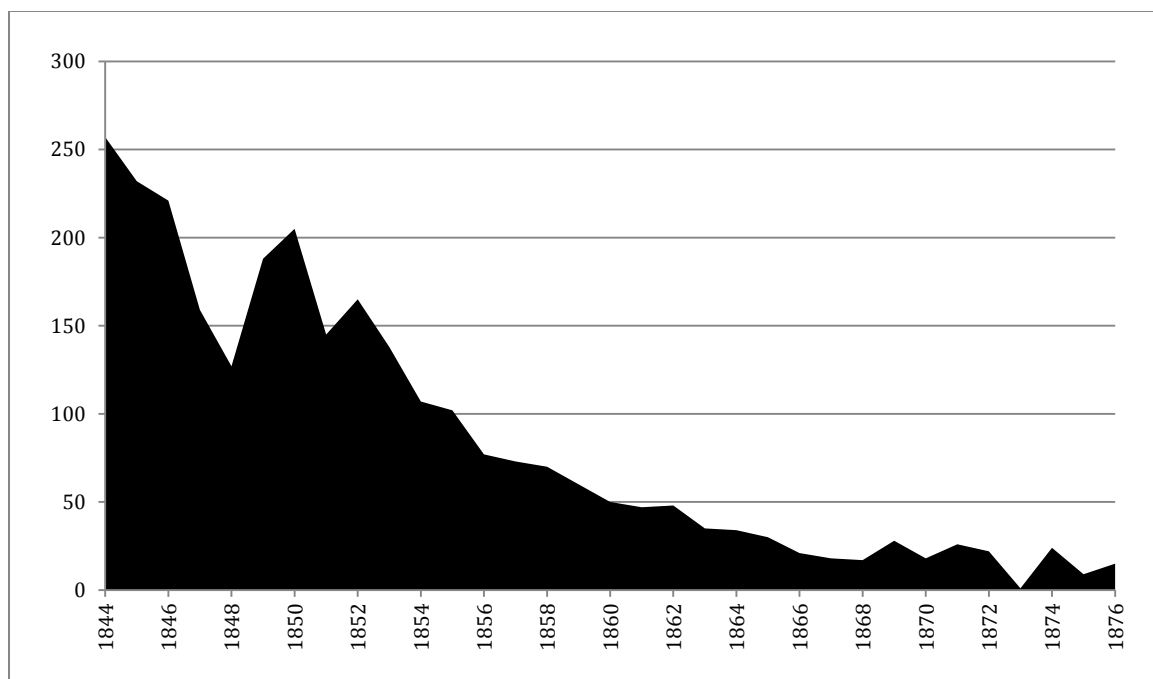
¹⁷ *West Riding QS 1840-80*, West Yorkshire Archives Service: Wakefield WYP1

¹⁸ Entry for 5 April 1852, *Worsted Committee Minute Books*, West Yorkshire Archives Service: Bradford 56D88/1.

¹⁹ *Worsted Committee Account Books, 1847-76*, West Yorkshire Archives Service: Bradford 56D88/3/3; *Borough Watch Committee records*, Bradford, 1847-1865, West Yorkshire Archives Service: Bradford BBC1/2-5.

prosecutions in the decade up to 1853.²⁰ This period had seen the Inspectorate successfully adapt their operational methods to control appropriation in the factory, and, aside from relying on the police to arrest offenders, they remained the supreme external agency for the control of appropriation. As **Figure 1** shows, there were generally between 150 and 200 convictions in the 1840s and 1850s (the trade slump of the late 1840s reduced the number of employees, and therefore the number of convictions).

Figure 1: Convictions for prosecutions initiated by the Worsted Committee 1844-76



From 1852 onwards there was a steady decline in the number of convictions, as **Figure 1** demonstrates. In 1853, the number of General Inspectors had been reduced from eight to three, with a consequent fall in the number of prosecutions the Committee advanced through the courts.²¹ The Committee was forced to cut back on its activities, not because the need for their services had disappeared, but due to the financial crisis caused by the withdrawal of the soap subsidy. The consequences of taking away the government subsidy appeared to have been viewed as nothing less than catastrophic, and prompted the Committee to wonder if they could continue their work. Some Inspectors in this period left to join the higher echelons of

²⁰ *Worsted Committee Conviction Registers*, West Yorkshire Archives Service: Bradford 29D93/2-5.

²¹ Heaton (1965, p. 43).

the borough/county police forces since it offered a more secure pensioned occupation, but a few senior policemen journeyed in the opposite direction to join the Inspectorate.²²

The Committee's decision to continue primarily turned on the fact that they considered 'the new improved system of Police insufficient for enforcing the Worsted Acts' and eventually they decided that rationalization and cost-cutting could ensure the Committee's survival if at a more circumspect level.²³ Indeed, once the Committee's funds had dwindled after the 1853 crisis, the fall in the number of prosecutions that had resulted from the Committee's reduced operations, paralleled the financial health of the organization (see **Figure 1**).²⁴

Professional policing in Bradford and the West Riding

Whilst the Worsted Inspectorate had been created in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, it was to be another half-century before a full-time professional police emerged in the West Riding. The Municipal Corporations Act 1835 enabled incorporated boroughs to create Borough police forces, and unincorporated boroughs to apply for corporation by charter.²⁵ During the next decade or so, over sixty boroughs gradually took advantage of this chance to be incorporated, including Bradford in 1847.²⁶ Within a year of a Borough Charter being granted on 24 April 1847, the town council created Bradford Borough Police on 1 January 1848, with an initial strength of sixty-four officers. The West Riding of Yorkshire remained without a county police force until 1856, when it was forced to introduce a constabulary as a result of the passing of the County and Borough Police Act.²⁷

In the 1840s the relationship on the ground between Worsted Inspectors (who, despite having the power of entry and search within the homes of suspects, did not have any arresting

²² A former Manchester constable joined the Inspectorate in 1876.

²³ 26 September 1853, *Worsted Committee Minute Books*, West Yorkshire Archives Service: Bradford 56D88/1.

²⁴ The Committee's bank balance continued to grow after 1853 because of the effective cutting of costs. For example, the dismissal of all but two Inspectors saved hundreds of pounds in wage bills. They also rationalized their assets by selling some shares, and collecting debts owed to them from manufacturers who had not fully paid over their drawback fees by 1853.

²⁵ Incorporation by charter was seen as an important advantage for the populace of a town; it conferred rights and responsibilities including the election of a Borough Council by ratepayers, and the appointment of a salaried Treasurer and Town Clerk.

²⁶ Bradford achieved city status in 1897.

²⁷ As Stallion and Wall have commented, 'before the County and Borough Police Act 1856 made the introduction of police forces compulsory in every borough and county, provincial police reforms were piecemeal, numerous and unfocused'; Stallion and Wall, (1999, p. 4).

powers) and the attested officers of the newly created police (who had the power of arrest but little working knowledge of worsted production processes) seem in the main to have been cordial and co-operative; in just under half the cases a Worsted Inspector and a police officer worked in tandem to apprehend an offender.²⁸ There also seems to have been considerable crossover with regard as to who took the lead in investigated cases of misappropriation and theft until at least the mid-century; several cases are reported in both the *Bradford Observer* and the *Leeds Mercury* in which the investigation was instigated by the police and then passed onto a Worsted Inspector. For example, a Leeds police officer thought that two men were storing stolen worsted in their house. After informing a Worsted Inspector of his suspicions, the Inspector obtained a search warrant and, accompanied by the constable they visited the house. Finding it locked the constable kept watch whilst the Worsted Inspector effected entry through the back of the house. The worsted was secured, and the offenders were prosecuted by the Worsted Inspector.²⁹

There are numerous other reports of the police and the Inspectors working closely together in order to investigate workplace misappropriation.³⁰ But, if anything, the move to factory production encouraged the police to pass even more workplace appropriation cases over to the Worsted Inspectors, as these *private* areas were seen as being outside the remit of a police primarily created to maintain *public* order. For example, the 1838 and 1842 guidelines issued to the Leeds Borough Police only spoke of patrolling streets, thoroughfares and houses.³¹ The factory was not suggested as an area which needed supervision. In fact, several police forces, including the Metropolitan Police of London, ordered their officers not to obstruct people from going to work, nor were workpeople to be arbitrarily searched, so that relations between police and the working-classes could improve.³²

Of course, it remained the duty of a constable to arrest anyone he saw committing (or suspected of having committed) a crime. However, appropriation of workplace materials mostly occurred within the workplace, and whilst inside the factory an offender was very

²⁸ *West Riding QS 1840-80*, West Yorkshire Archives Service: Wakefield WYP1.

²⁹ *Leeds Mercury*, 10 October 1857

³⁰ See for examples *Bradford Observer*, 9 February 1854 and 15 June 1854.

³¹ *Instructions for Day and Night Police, 1838-42*, West Yorkshire Archive Service: Leeds WYP/LE/A113/424

³² *Police Orders, 4 March, 1840, Metropolitan Police Orders - General regulations and Orders for the Government and Guidance of the Metropolitan Police Force* A136/158.

unlikely to be caught red-handed by a passing bobby. Indeed, the constable was unlikely to have been allowed by factory owners to freely patrol inside the perimeter fence. A number of Chief Constable's reports for example make it clear that the police felt no responsibility for stopping the numerous thefts taking place in the warehouses and manufactories since they had no right of access to such private locations. Bradford's Chief Constable, Frederick W Grauhan, blamed the robberies on the inattention of factory supervisory staff, and suggested that the responsibility for catching the perpetrators lay with private security forces and not his men.³³ It is true that the security of material left outside as part of the production process, such as drying cloth on tenter racks *was* a police responsibility, but tenting was increasingly being carried out inside the factory.³⁴

Therefore, although the arrest of appropriators was legally the responsibility of the police officer, in practice constables were unlikely to be involved in the detection of 'theft' within the factory, and were only called upon to exercise the power of arrest at the instigation of the foreman or the Worsted Inspector. The Bradford policeman, then, had the authority, but perhaps lacked the time, resources and inclination to intervene within the factory walls. They saw their duties only beginning at the factory gate and out into public space, and their concern was the regulation of public space not private space.³⁵

In reality, the Worsted Inspectors were more capable of pursuing workers for these offences than were the police. In addition to lacking expertise and legal knowledge in this area, the police were seen as intruders into workers' lives.³⁶ All in all, however, Worsted Inspectors appeared to go about their work with only occasional hindrance or opposition, let alone fear of attack. Compare this to the often open hostility shown to policemen in the textile producing districts of Colne or Bradford, where there were well over a thousand cases of assaults on policemen recorded between 1869 and 1879.³⁷ Policemen, of course, had to deal with aggressive drunks and disorderly vagrants, but even so there seems to be a vast

³³ Grauhan was Chief Constable from 1859 to 1874. See, for example, the *Bradford Chief Constable's Reports* of 1863, 1869, and 1873 West Yorkshire Archives Service: Bradford BBC/1/2.

³⁴ *Huddersfield Borough Police Force Occurrence Books, 1873-5* West Yorkshire Archives Wakefield A90/136.

³⁵ 1873 *Huddersfield Police Occurrence Book* West Yorkshire Archives: Wakefield A90/136; 4 October, 1864, *John Crossley and Co. Directors Minute Books 1864-66*, West Yorkshire Archives Calderdale MIC: 21/1.

³⁶ Storch (1976 and 1981).

³⁷ *Bradford Chief Constable's Reports*, West Yorkshire Archives Service: Bradford BCC1/2.

difference in the number of assaults on the officers of these two enforcement agencies. So real was the threat of violence that, until 1856, the police did not dare venture into some industrial parts of Leeds, yet Worsteds Inspectors patrolled these areas apparently without fear. Indeed, there were only a few recorded cases of assaults against any Inspector or their families, and these tended to be fairly minor. It may reasonably be assumed that they were disliked, even hated, and certainly feared, but they were not seen as *alien* to the working class districts in the same way as police constables were.³⁸

The reduction of the numbers of Inspectors in 1853, and the withdrawal of Inspectors from various areas, had left something of a vacuum. Able to step into the space were the borough, and (from 1856) county police forces. However, they were only willing to partially fill the void. Bradford's police force grew by 60% between 1848 and 1858, and by 31% between 1859 and 1870.³⁹ Over that period, the proportion of police to population altered from 1 police officer to every 872 individuals in 1859 to 1 in every 658 in 1870, with the annual cost rising from £6,661 to £10,654. By the late 1850s Bradford Borough Police were confident enough in their field of operations to launch an offensive against 'every species of ruffianism', dog-fighters, prize fights, street games, prostitution, and pawnbrokers.⁴⁰ The pursuit of workplace appropriators would not have been out of keeping with this moral crusade. The arrest and formal charging of suspected appropriators had always been the responsibility of the police, but henceforth the police had the staff to test their investigative skills on factory appropriation. Three plain-clothes detective officers were employed in 1843, a progressive development which was a rare and early experiment in detective policing, with an Inspector appointed to head up a Detective Department in 1846.⁴¹ This they effectively failed to do, however.

³⁸ See Godfrey and Cox (2013, pp. 126-8) for details of some attacks on Worsteds Inspectors and the response from the Committee.

³⁹ *Bradford Watch Committee Minute Books, 1848-58*, West Yorkshire Archives Service: Bradford 56D88/1; *Chief Constables Reports, 1859-70*, West Yorkshire Archives Service: Bradford BBC1/2-5.

⁴⁰ For example, Bradford Police first patrolled visiting fairs and circuses in 1852, and started to attend cricket matches in 1853, see *Borough Watch Committee Minute Book, 1852-56* West Yorkshire Archives Bradford BBC1/5/2. Policemen were also encouraged in this period to replace Factory Inspectors, which would have brought them physically into the workplace. See Johnston (1992, p.5).

⁴¹ This was within a year of the creation of the Metropolitan Police's Detective Department (although of course the Bow Street 'Runners' had been operating as professional plain-clothes detectives since the mid-eighteenth century – see Cox (2012).

If the Worsted Inspectors had left the field, the police forces were disinclined to pick up their swords. Nor were the officers of the West Riding county force, which was formed in 1856 following the County and Borough Police Act which made the introduction of police forces compulsory in every borough or county throughout England and Wales.⁴² Neither borough nor county policemen involved themselves with workplace appropriators whilst they remained within the factory, unless they were called in by the foreman or Worsted Inspector to exercise their power of arrest. The police simply lacked the expertise and inclination to usurp the Worsted Inspectorate's specialist policing functions. There still seemed to be a place for the Worsted Committee and their Inspectors.

Effect of Worsted Inspectorate on the development of borough and county policing in the West Riding

To what extent did the existence of the Worsted Committee affect the introduction of such formal public police services in the West Riding of Yorkshire? As is well known, the relationship between industrialization, urbanization, and the development of formal policing agencies in the nineteenth century, is usually represented as a causal one.⁴³ The theory that the threat to public order posed by the increasing numbers of workers crowding into the manufacturing districts, together with the rise of industrial and political 'militancy', 'provoked' the middle and upper-classes to call for uniformed and disciplined bodies of men to act as locally controlled police services, is now well-established. However, this theory relies on the assertion that the police forces in the northern manufacturing districts were supported politically (and financially through local taxation) by the industrial elite, and that the police in turn provided services for the manufacturers. These duties included the protection of the millowner and his property in the street, in his house, and in his factory, but also the protection of his commercial interests when threatened. Thus for example the legal and operational requirement to preserve the public peace necessitated police governance of strikers' actions in times of labour disputes.⁴⁴ It has been suggested that, for this reason, the working classes resisted the introduction of the police, whilst the urban and industrial elites

⁴² Emsley (1983 and 1996).

⁴³ See for example Silver (1967).

⁴⁴ Living in the towns and cities as they did, 'the new manufacturing and merchant urban bourgeoisie lacked certain protection against crime which the rural gentry enjoyed. They did not have the ecological safeguards of large estates and lack of proximity to the 'dangerous classes' according to Brogden (1981, pp. 49-50). It was therefore necessary, Storch (1981, p. 93) asserted, to create a force which would protect the factories, and also the homes of factory owners, to turn the police into a weapon of the employers.

welcomed them with open arms.⁴⁵

These assertions can however be challenged, notably on the question of policing industrial disputes. The first problem is that of 'class sympathy'. Most members of the borough forces previously held agricultural or industrial labouring occupations.⁴⁶ The sympathies of a police force drawn from the same social background and living in the same communities as those people on strike may have undermined the loyalty they held to the law.⁴⁷ Conversely, policemen drawn from a higher social class may have 'exacerbated rather than mollified class violence'.⁴⁸ It appears that the use of policemen drawn either from within or outside the local community may have handicapped the control of striking workers. This, however, was not the opinion of those northern millowners who testified to the Constabulary Force Commissioners in 1836.⁴⁹ This is not surprising; the Commission was after all designed by Chadwick to find evidence that a national police force would be beneficial to many sectors of society. With this in mind, they concluded that for 'the want of an efficient preventative force, the peace and manufacturing prosperity of the country are exposed to considerable danger'.⁵⁰ No manufacturers from the West Riding contributed to the Commission, however,

Was this because the millowners in that region already had control over a preventative force which acted directly to protect millowners' property? The borough force were charged with controlling labour disputes when they reached the streets, but the truly effective work of dissuading employees from leaving their employment had already been achieved by the Worsted Inspectorate. Naturally, manufacturers were loathe to contribute financially for policing services they did not need, or for a duplication of services.⁵¹ Witness their reluctance to financially support the Worsted Committee between 1853 and 1870 when many manufacturers believed that their internal supervisory structures were sufficient to cope with

⁴⁵ Storch (1976 and 1981).

⁴⁶ Emsley (1996, p. 180).

⁴⁷ See for example Reiner (1985, p. 22); Foster (1974, pp. 56-61); Storch (1976, p. 89, pp. 92-3)

⁴⁸ Silver (1967, p. 10).

⁴⁹ Emsley (1983); Storch (1981, pp. 92-3).

⁵⁰ *1836 Constabulary Commission Report*.

⁵¹ Hay (1975, p. 59). The Bradford Watch Committee were always seeking to reduce the costs of policing the borough, and many entries record their resistance to increases in policemen's wages. They went so far as to regularly commission surveys of other comparative forces to ensure that they paid the very lowest rates of pay. See *Borough Watch Committee Minute Book, 1862*, West Yorkshire Archives: Bradford 56D88/1/5. Again in 1871 the survey revealed that the Chief Constable of Bradford received the lowest salary of all Chief Constables controlling forces of over a hundred men.

the appropriation 'problem'. It must also be remembered that prominent manufacturers were in a dominant position to affect the development of the borough forces. A quarter of the Watch Committee which oversaw the introduction of Bradford's Borough Police were Worsteds Committee members, and two-thirds were manufacturers eligible to subscribe to their services.⁵²

Rather than acting as a positive model for the new police, the Worsteds Committee and their Inspectorate impeded the development of both the Bradford borough force and the West Riding county force. The latter was opposed by manufacturers and the West Riding urban elites before its compulsory adoption in 1856, long after the permissive 1839 and 1840 County Police Acts.⁵³ Criticism of county forces was evident in both rural and industrial areas, and the existence of the Worsteds Committee was a contributory factor.⁵⁴ The Worsteds Inspectors were an efficient and competent force, as one police historian admitted.⁵⁵ However, their example had not led to agitation for borough forces, and certainly not for a county force, but rather acted as a constant reminder that privatized police agencies were efficient, cheaper and easier to control than official police agencies. Manufacturers in areas patrolled by Worsteds Inspectors did not gleefully welcome ever increasing legions of blue-coated workers; rather they saw the police as a necessary but expensive agency to be tolerated but not indulged. No doubt, even in areas where private police agencies existed, manufacturers desired a strong police presence when industrial strife spilled over onto the public streets, and, like many people, they wanted the police to pacify the public streets and keep them clear of crime.⁵⁶ However in the districts patrolled by the Worsteds Inspectors, there was clearly a noticeably ambivalent attitude towards the police forces. For example, at a meeting of Halifax ratepayers, Inspector Seed (the Halifax Worsteds Inspector) together with prominent businessmen, formed a Committee to express local discontent with the Halifax borough force. They declared that 'all policemen are evil; but they were a necessary evil'.⁵⁷

⁵² *Borough Watch Committee records*, 1847, West Yorkshire Archives: Bradford BBC/1/2

⁵³ All counties and boroughs were required to establish police forces under the 1856 County and Borough Police Act.

⁵⁴ Emsley (1983, p. 76). Jones believes that the stationing of the military in Bradford's Belle Vue Barracks, who could deal with industrial disorder, also hindered the adoption of domestic police agencies in the industrial West Riding (Jones 1983, p. 157).

⁵⁵ Smith (1974) believes that the Inspectors helped the burghers of Bradford to decide to establish a professional force of policemen, but offers no evidence for his theory.

⁵⁶ Witness the fears of Sir Charles Napier in Manchester; Napier (1857, p. 146).

⁵⁷ *Bradford Observer*, 22 July 1876

This can hardly be taken as a ringing endorsement. Clearly, police historians should at least recognize the differences in attitude towards the police in those industrial areas which had established private police forces, and those that had not.

Bradford and Salford – a tale of two cities

In order to investigate the extent to which the Worsted Inspectorate affected both the development and policing practices in the West Riding, this article compares the two similarly sized towns (later cities) of Bradford and Salford (the latter being in the cotton-working heartland of Lancashire).⁵⁸ Both towns were incorporated as boroughs in the 1840s, with Salford preceding Bradford by three years (1844 and 1847 respectively), and both experienced similar rapid population growth from the mid-nineteenth century (see **Figure 2**).

However, the development of the respective boroughs' forces proved to be very different, most probably as a result of Bradford also possessing a Worsted Inspectorate, whilst Salford as a cotton-working centre did not possess a similar private police force. Although the populations of the towns as shown in **Figure 2** were very similar, with growth patterns being closely paralleled, **Figure 3** shows that from the 1870s (when the Worsted Inspectorate experienced something of a resurgence) the annual cost of Bradford Police to the ratepayers was considerably less than that of that borne by the ratepayers of Salford.

The main reason for this discrepancy appears to lay in the ratio of police officers per head of population in the respective towns. **Figure 4** illustrates that from 1870 onward, the number of police officers in relation to the population of Bradford remained noticeably less than that of Salford – averaging 1 police officer for every 794 inhabitants of Bradford compared to an average of 1 police officer for every 693 inhabitants of Salford. This is a considerable discrepancy, suggesting that the presence of the Worsted Inspectorate significantly reduced the workload of the Bradford Borough Police (and it must be remembered that as stated above, many member of the Worsted Committee were also Watch Committee members, responsible for public policing).

⁵⁸ Salford did not achieve city status until 1926. Figures abstracted from published annual *Judicial Statistics*. These annual statistics were first compiled in 1857, meaning that no comparisons are available for the period of 1847 (date of the founding of Bradford Borough Police) to 1856. The methods of calculating the statistics utilised in the annual *Judicial Statistics* changed markedly in 1893, rendering post-1892 comparisons extremely difficult and largely meaningless.

Fig 2: Population of Bradford and Salford, 1857-1892

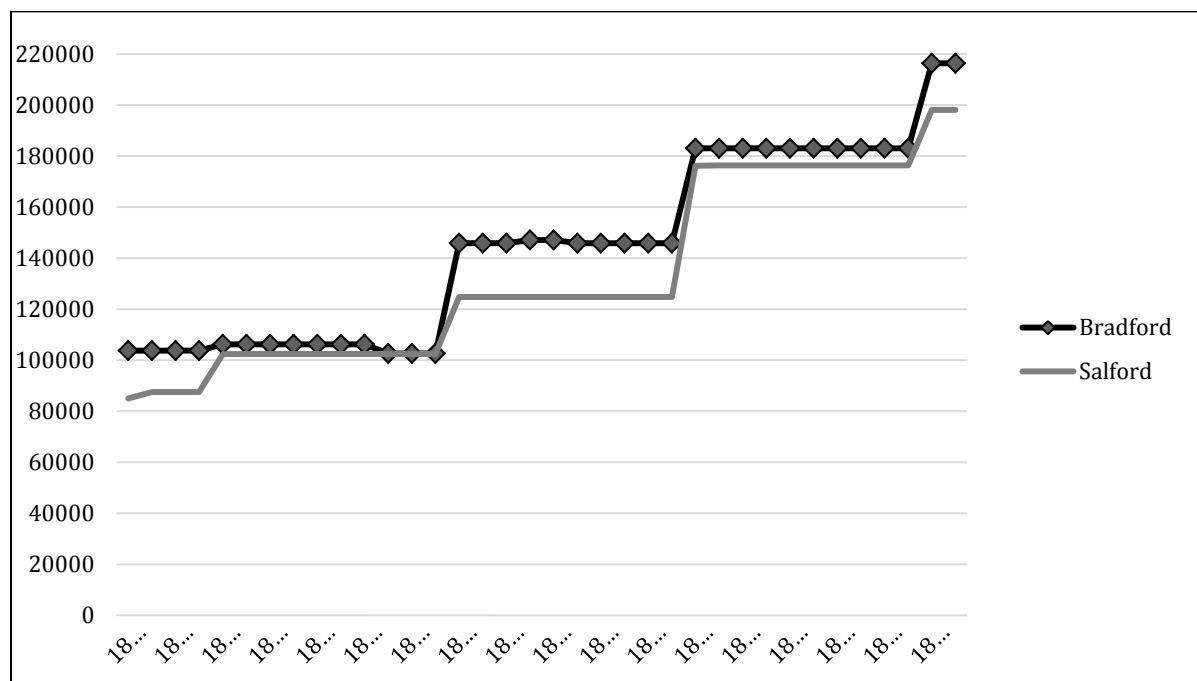


Figure 3: Annual cost (£) of Police in Bradford and Salford, 1857-1892

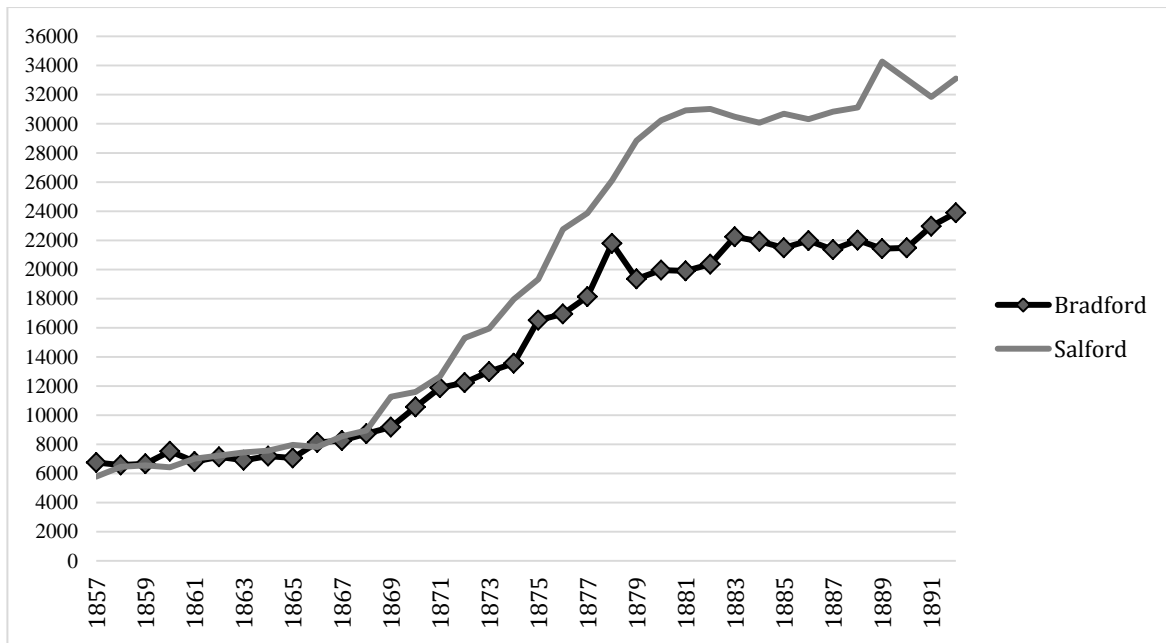
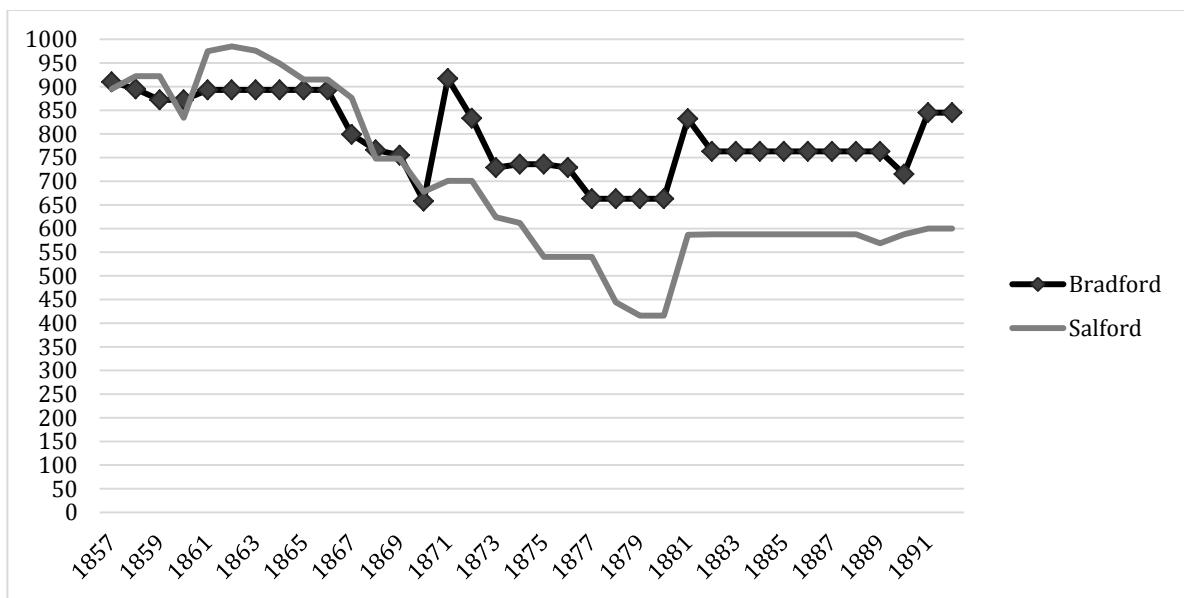


Figure 4: Number of police officers per capita, Bradford and Salford, 1857-1892

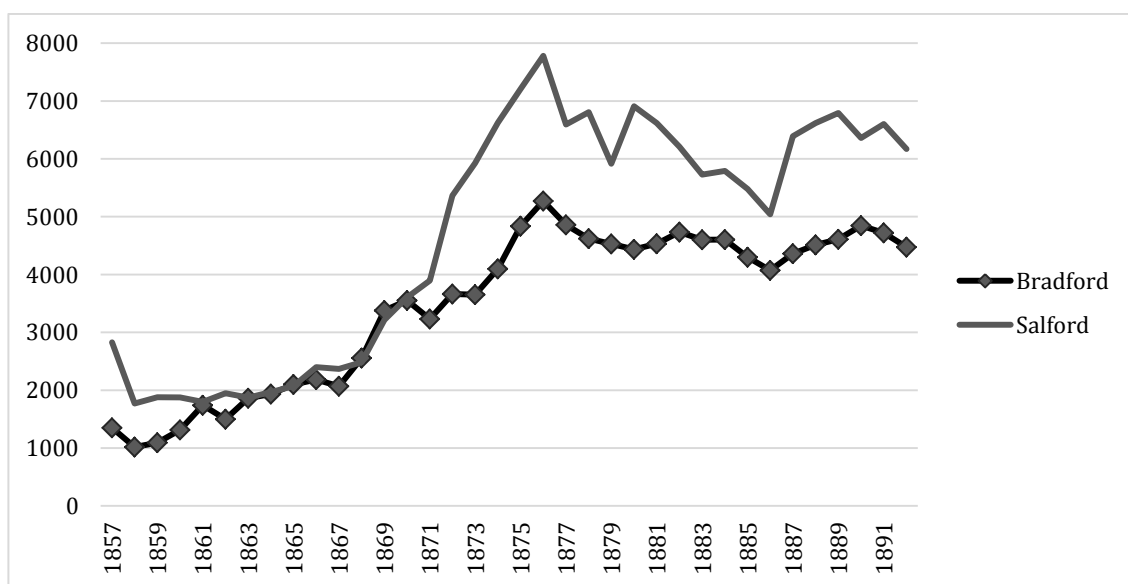


This possibility is reinforced by **Figure 5**, which shows the number of summary offences prosecuted by the police in both Bradford and Salford between 1857 and 1892. It is clear that

following the re-emergence of the Worsted Inspectorate in the early 1870s, Bradford police consistently prosecuted significantly less summary offences than their counterparts in Salford – an average of 3478 offenders per year in Bradford compared to an average of 4692 offenders per year in Salford.

There is no reason to suppose that the inhabitants of the Lancashire town were any more or less law-abiding than their Yorkshire counterparts, or that the Bradford police were otherwise less active, suggesting that the discrepancy once again owes much to the presence of the Worsted Inspectorate, who remained an active private prosecution agency throughout the period.

Figure 5: Number of recorded summary offences, Bradford and Salford, 1857-1892



Conclusion

The employers' most faithful servants – the Worsteds Committee and its Inspectorate – survived both the 1853 crisis and subsequent downturns, to continue their work until their final dénouement in the second half of the twentieth century. In the length of their service they were an atypical prosecution service. Whilst many of the private police forces described earlier continued throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, they were increasingly seen as anachronistic in an ever-more centralizing system of policing that was seen as more integral to communities as a whole, rather than representing vested interests. The constabulary (founded in 1285) at York Minster and other cathedrals such as Salisbury lost their powers of arrest during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, no longer being attested, whilst others such as the Admiralty Police were subsequently absorbed into larger organisations. Many other private prosecution agencies morphed into private security forces, responsible for the day-to-day smooth running of, for example, the Oxbridge colleges, but ultimately dependent on the local police authority to deal with more serious crimes that occurred on their premises.

The Worsteds Committee, by contrast, lasted for nearly two hundred years as a viable concern, continuing to act in the interests of their employers until well after World War Two. Unusual too was the range of their duties, pursuing the suspect from the point of crime through the prosecution of offenders until the final judgement of guilt or innocence was delivered in court. Even in its depressed period between 1853 and 1870, the Committee made an impact, prosecuting over 800 cases. It has been demonstrated that they also had a significant effect on the development of public policing in West Yorkshire, especially with regard to the Bradford Borough Police. It must therefore be concluded that this employers' police, empowered by law to coerce and intimidate the workforce, may have been the most dynamic private policing agency seen in England in the last three centuries and which at first impeded, then accommodated, and lastly partnered, the introduction and operation of public policing in the West Riding of Yorkshire.